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HEALTH

LA clinics lose funding for transgender health care as Trump executive orders take hold



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St. John's Community Health reported that it lost a \$1.6 million federal grant supporting services for transgender people as a result of President Trump's executive orders. Here, Medi-Cal documents sit at St. John's Community Health in Los Angeles on Dec. 19, 2023. Photo by Lauren Justice for CalMatters

IN SUMMARY

A Los Angeles community health clinic is considering a lawsuit against the Trump administration over a rescinded grant that was meant to support services for transgender patients.

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A Los Angeles health clinic says it's losing federal funding as a result of President [Donald Trump](#)'s executive orders targeting transgender people.

St. John's Community Health, one of the largest free and reduced-cost providers in Los Angeles, reported that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday terminated a \$1.6 million grant that was supposed to support its transgender health and social services program.

St. John's is the first California health provider to publicly report service impacts as a result of the Trump administration's actions. According to a letter from the CDC, the grant was ended in order to comply with an [executive order requiring federal agencies to only recognize two genders](#).

"At St. John's we believe everyone has a fundamental human right to health care. You can disagree with quote-on-quote gender ideology and how people may choose to live their lives, but that doesn't give you the right to strip away their access to health care," said Jim Mangia, president and chief executive of St. John's Community Health.

The grant, which started in 2022, was funded through the CDC's HIV prevention program. It allowed St. John's to operate a program for transgender adults that included sexually transmitted infection and HIV testing, health education and connections to social services including housing, substance use treatment and food stamps, Mangia said. More than 500 people received services through the grant annually.

Last week, along with thousands of clinics across the country, St. John's experienced a brief suspension in its access to more than \$18 million of federal funding as a result of a separate executive order and internal budget memo that attempted to [broadly freeze federal aid](#).

Two separate judges [have blocked that order temporarily](#), but those decisions don't apply to the executive order now preventing St. John's from accessing its grant money for transgender patients, Mangia said.

St. John's will not cut services and is prepared to sue over the continued withholding of federal money, he added.

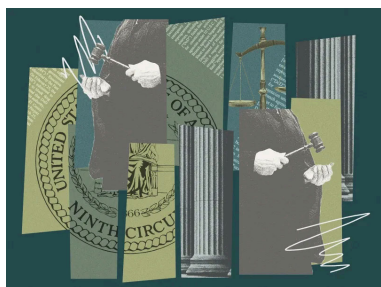
“We believe these grants were allocated by Congress and are constitutionally protected. We will pursue every avenue available to us to keep these programs funded,” Mangia said.

Several of Trump's executive orders in the past two weeks have targeted transgender people, including attempts to bar them from military service and prevent schools from recognizing pronouns or when a student transitions.

Last week, Trump issued another [executive order](#) barring federal funding for transgender health services for minors, including hormone therapy and surgical procedures. The order specifically called out federal research grants given to hospitals and medical schools as well as Medicare and Medicaid funding.

In that order and others, Trump describes gender-affirming care as “sterilizing,” “mutilation” and “maiming,” characterizations that are in direct opposition to clinical evidence supported by major medical organizations including the [American Medical Association](#), [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) and the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#), all of which oppose government interference in doctor-patient decisions.

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Already hospitals across the country are [stopping gender-affirming services](#) for young people, according to news reports, including major hospitals in New York, Denver and Washington, D.C., which Trump praised in a statement as his “intended effect.”

Organizations across the state that provide health and social services to transgender people are worried about their funding, said Jorge Reyes Salinas, communications director for Equality California, the state's largest LGBTQ and civil rights advocacy group.

“These actions by the Trump administration could deny trans people the right to medically necessary care and put their housing and employment at risk — deepening pre-existing health and economic disparities and fueling further discrimination,” Salinas said in a statement.

At least 24 organizations in California have received federal funding over the past five years for transgender health programs or research, according to federal data on grants distributed by the CDC and National Institutes of Health.

California’s LGBTQ groups and top Democratic officials were quick to condemn the moves last week and assure state residents that California laws protecting transgender rights and services remain in place.

“California families seeking gender affirming care, and the doctors and staff who provide it, are protected under state laws like the [Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Intersex \(TGI\) Inclusive Care Act](#). The President’s order does not change that,” Attorney General Rob Bonta said in a statement.

State law requires state-regulated insurers to cover medically necessary gender-affirming care, including mental health services. It provides license protections for doctors who treat transgender patients, and includes broad nondiscrimination protections.

Still, Trump’s orders have sown confusion among providers who are hesitant to run afoul of the law or lose vital money.

“Some medical providers are starting to preemptively cancel appointments with transgender youth because they’re afraid of losing their license or funding,” said Dannie Ceseña, director of the California LGBTQ Health & Human Services Network. “I’m hearing it across the state from a variety of partners.”

Ceseña said any such cancellations are “inconsistent with California law” and families should contact the attorney general’s office if they experience them.

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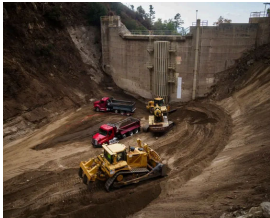
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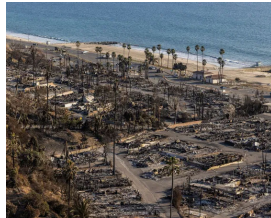
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